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Prevention of armed conflict

The situation in Afghanistan

General and complete disarmament

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Letter dated 6 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a speech given by Mr. D. A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, at a meeting with German political, parliamentary and civic leaders in Berlin on 5 June 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly under agenda items 14, 19, 98, 122 and 123 and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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[Original: Russian]

Speech given by Mr. D. A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, at a meeting with German political, parliamentary and civic leaders in Berlin on 5 June 2008

I ask you please to be patient because my speech is rather long, but I hope it will not be at all boring.

I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to address German political and civic leaders. Present here today are people who have years of cooperation with Russia behind them, people whose personal initiatives, professional qualities and creative projects are developing the spirit of partnership and cooperation between our countries and peoples.

It is in large part thanks to your efforts that we have such regular, wide-ranging and substantial contacts today. I hope that my first visit to the Federal Republic of Germany as President of the Russian Federation will help them continue to grow and develop.

Russia and Germany are two European countries that have traversed difficult times in history. Step by step they have built up trust in each other and in so doing have truly set a unique example for Europe and done much to install a climate of growing trust throughout the European continent.

Despite the tragedy of two world wars, we have succeeded in bringing about definitive historical reconciliation between our countries. Time was needed for this to happen, but more important was the part played by the humanistic ideals and values that are shared by all of Europe and are an integral part of the culture of Russia and the unified Germany. I agree with my colleague, Vice Chancellor Steinmeier, that relations between Russia and Germany mirror to a large extent the relations between Russia and Europe as a whole.

Many are asking themselves today what political line we can expect of Russia. I have answered this question on many different occasions. I want to say from the outset that in both international and internal affairs we are committed above all to the rule of law and to having all countries, above all the big Powers, respect international law. There can be no doubt that this is an essential condition for managing and maintaining world development. This is all the more important now that the artificial bipolar system is giving way to a more natural poly-centred international system with the United Nations at its heart.

The founders of this system, the founders of the United Nations, showed great foresight and established the United Nations as an organization in which countries would cooperate on an equal basis. There is no other such organization in the world and the coming years are not likely to produce one. Attempts to replace the United Nations with "exclusive format" groups (as is sometimes proposed) would have a totally destructive effect on the current world order.

Of course, the United Nations does need to modernize in order to better respond to the realities of today's multi-polar world. The United Nations Security Council needs to be reformed on the basis of broad consensus between United Nations Members. We value Germany's commitment to seeking compromise solutions in this respect that would not cause division within the organization.

The future world order is directly linked to the future of Europe, the whole Euro-Atlantic region, and therefore the future of European civilization in its entirety.

I am certain that we cannot solve Europe's problems until we achieve a sense of identity and an organic unity between all of its integral components, including the Russian Federation. Having cast aside the Soviet system and any idea of its restoration, Russia has laid the foundations of a State that is completely compatible with the rest of Europe or, to be more precise, with the best of all that makes up the common heritage of European civilization.

To use the words of John Le Carré, Russia has "come in from the cold" after almost a century of isolation and self-isolation. Russia is now actively returning to global politics and the global economy, bringing with it all its natural, financial and intellectual resources and possibilities.

Russia is staking its future on innovation. Steadily improving macroeconomic indicators and a high level of financial, social and political stability for serious players on the European and global markets are opening up new horizons for reliable and modern investment.

Our goal today is not just to achieve a high quality of economic growth but also to transform the whole social structure of our society, including through support for the fast-growing middle class. It is the middle class that will provide the solid foundation on which we can build democracy and ensure sustainable development in general.

The outlines of our new long-term economic policy are clear today. This policy focuses on full and comprehensive modernization of key areas of industry and infrastructure. What we are talking about is a technological revolution and in this context one of our clear priorities is to cooperate with European States in this work.

I will say more about these matters today, but I want to say now that one thing is clear: a free market and openness to the outside world guarantee that our changes cannot be reversed.

The end of the cold war made it possible to build up genuinely equal cooperation between Russia, the European Union and North America as three branches of European civilization.

It is my conviction that Atlanticism as a sole historical principle has already had its day. We need to talk today about unity between the whole Euro-Atlantic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Life itself dictates the need for this kind of cooperation.

But looking at the future construction of relations between the countries of Europe, we see a worrying tendency to take a selective and politicized approach to our common history.

In this respect I think that normal honest academic debate is needed. The significance of the Russian-German reconciliation is clearly underestimated. It is just as important for the peaceful future of Europe as was, say, the reconciliation between France and Germany.

We especially need to be aware of the consequences of marginalizing and isolating countries, creating zones with differentiated levels of security and abandoning the creation of general regional collective security systems.

We also cannot allow ourselves to be stripped of our common spiritual and moral heritage that was the great victory over fascism. We cannot forget that the preservation of Europe's material culture during those war years came at the price of many millions of lives sacrificed by the peoples of the Soviet Union and by other European peoples.

Let us take a close look at the situation in Europe today. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Europe's current architecture still bears the stamp of an ideology inherited from the past. An organization such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe could, it would seem, embody European civilization's newfound unity, but it is prevented from doing so, prevented from becoming a full-fledged general regional organization.

The problem lies not only in the organization's own incomplete institutional development but also in the obstruction created by other groups intent on continuing the old line of bloc politics.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has also failed so far to give new purpose to its existence. It is trying to find this purpose today by globalizing its missions, including to the detriment of the United Nations prerogatives, which I mentioned just now, and by bringing in new members. But this is clearly still not the solution.

There is talk of exchanging further NATO expansion to the east for "something else", but I think this is just so many illusions. I am convinced that in such a case our relations with NATO would be completely undermined, ruined for a long time to come. There will not be confrontation of course, but the price would nonetheless be high indeed and would cause serious damage.

Afghanistan provides one of the clearest possible examples of how NATO and Russia share the same fundamental security interests. We are actively helping our partners working in that country. At the Russia-NATO summit in Bucharest we took the important step of agreeing on land transit for non-military cargoes via Russian Federation territory. We are completing work on the use of our military-transport aircraft. Russia is expanding training opportunities for Afghan anti-drugs and anti-terrorism personnel. These are all areas where we need to keep working together.

This is all extremely important for reaching the objectives set by the international community through the United Nations Security Council. Does it make sense to jeopardize this cooperation for the sake of a bloc politics approach that continues by inertia?

I believe that only by openly and honestly sharing all our current concerns with each other can we make progress in building a genuine greater Europe. Our predecessors during the cold war years managed to draw up the Helsinki Final Act

(which, as the legal foundation for the European system, has withstood the test of time despite all the difficulties encountered), and so why should we not be able to take the next step today? Namely, drafting and signing a legally binding treaty on European security to which the organizations currently working in the Euro-Atlantic area could become parties.

There were attempts to conclude such an agreement in the past. Suffice it to recall the Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1928. But that agreement failed to work and shared the sorry fate of the League of Nations. In today's world, when no one wants war in Europe and we have all been made wiser by the lessons of the twentieth century, such an agreement has a better hope of success.

We could look at a regional pact based, naturally, on the principles of the United Nations Charter and clearly defining the importance of force as factor in relations within the Euro-Atlantic community. This pact could achieve a comprehensive resolution of the security and arms control issues in Europe that are of such concern to us all.

I also propose that we consider holding a general European summit to start the process of drafting this agreement. Absolutely all European countries should take part in this summit as individual countries, leaving aside any allegiances to blocs or other groups. National interests stripped bare of any distorting ideological motivations should be the starting point for all taking part.

In my view, the main thing is that, unless we cut back on military spending, we shall not be able to find the resources needed to respond effectively to the real challenges we face such as illegal immigration, climate change and global poverty.

These challenges cannot be resolved through the use of force. They need to be dealt with at their source, by addressing the problems that give rise to these threats in the first place.

This includes the global food crisis, which is not only affecting people's material existence today but also raises ethical questions when food crops are used to produce fuel that has negligible energy efficiency.

This also includes energy security, which we can ensure only through the collective effort of all participants in the energy chain.

It was Russia that raised this issue at the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg. But we need to go further today and build on the principles we agreed on back then. We are ready to work with the European Union on creating an early warning mechanism in the energy sector, with the participation of transit countries, of course.

We are also ready to examine the possibility of establishing international consortia that would operate transit pipelines with the participation of companies from Russia, the European Union and the transit countries. This is an example of the interdependency that we have been talking about in Europe and in the globalizing world in general.

Along with this productive work on putting in place a common European strategy, we also need to work together on innovative progress and develop a common technological space together.

European integration must not and should not stop on the shores of the Baltic or the borders of Eastern Europe. Increased investment in the high-tech sectors is a necessary step.

The united Europe has an objective interest in increasing the volume and quality of Russian investment. We will give serious support to companies seeking to export capital in civilized fashion and become involved in joint organization of promising new production projects. We already have examples of such successful cooperation even in sensitive areas such as the nuclear energy, space, aviation, and transport machine-building sectors.

But today there are restrictions on Russian investment in European companies and projects that are unjustified from an economic and political point of view. We want to establish clear rules and put in place the most favourable conditions possible for foreign entrepreneurs developing high-tech production in our country, and we would like to see the same approach from our partners in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Russia does not need chaos and uncertainty in today's world. We have no interests that need to be guaranteed through such perverse means.

We often hear calls for Moscow to show restraint. We all need to show restraint in order to prevent escalation on any issue and break the vicious circle of unilateral action and reaction. We need to stop trying to force events and pursuing a fait accompli policy. We should start by simply taking a little time out to look at where we have come to and what we now face, whether the issue be Kosovo, NATO expansion or missile defence.

It is highly symptomatic that current differences with Russia are interpreted by many in the West as demonstrating a need to simply bring Russia's policies closer into line with those of the West. But we do not want to be "embraced" in this way. We need to look for common solutions. Sometimes we are simply told: stop being so prickly in international affairs. They tell us that democratic development and human rights issues are secondary; that they can close their eyes to them, and they give us examples of other countries that behave in just this way and with whom they get on fine.

But this approach does not suit us, above all because we think that human rights are one of the most basic and fundamental values. Human rights should not be part of any trade-off. What we welcome therefore is calm and honest discussion on a mutual basis of all the different issues.

In this respect, I should like to point out once more that Russian and European democracy share common roots. We share the same set of values and the same sources of law: Roman, Germanic and French law. I have said in the past that democracy is always shaped by history and by the national setting. We have a common history and we share the same humanitarian values. This common thinking is the foundation that enables us to speak not just the same legal or business language today but, I hope, also the same political language.

Colleagues,

Continuing from what I just said, there is another set of issues on which I would like to comment in more detail, namely, questions regarding the Russian

political system's development. This is a matter of interest at the moment and I think this is understandable.

Unfortunately, however, we also see evidence of misconceptions and even sometimes a distorted understanding of what is taking place in our country.

We attach great importance to improving our political system and developing the institutions of our civil society.

I would like to say a few words about our work to form a mature and effectively functioning party system. This was one of the objectives from the start of democratic transformation in our country. The road has not been easy. We have gone from numerous small parties, one-day parties, parties built around a single person, to establishing large, influential and responsible party organizations.

This work is still in progress of course. When we talk about building political parties, we forget that in many countries, Germany included, this was a process that took decades. We have been working on this for a mere ten years. But the fact that in the last two State Dumas four political parties have represented their voters is already cause for optimism.

The updated electoral laws have done much to create a stable and predictable party system. This has been achieved above all through elections based on party lists and a higher threshold for a party's eligibility to win seats. These were conscious decisions taken to strengthen our country's party system and prevent it from dissipating.

I think that these steps were not only justified but also necessary. They are in keeping with our objectives, with international values and with the demands of Russia's political system.

Support for non-governmental organizations is one of our clear priorities. Many of these organizations were mostly financed from abroad until 2006. I doubt that any developed Western country would tolerate such an overwhelming flood of foreign capital into its own "tertiary sector". We decided therefore to making funding of our own available to support Russian civil society organizations. This was a logical step. We are now spending more and more money every year on supporting different non-governmental organizations, including with State budget money. I should also mention the Public Chamber's successful work. Life has shown that there is a need for this organization, which is essentially laying the foundations for the development of civil society in general.

We very much want to see the emergence of as many non-governmental organizations as possible working on issues such as local self-government and increasing tolerance and inter-ethnic concord.

The ongoing dialogue between the different religions is playing a very positive role. Incidentally, we have seen a fivefold increase in the number of religious organizations registered in Russia over recent years.

But we are well aware that issues such as inter-ethnic tensions are becoming increasingly global in nature and are already a very real problem in many European countries. I think we therefore need to join efforts to devise common approaches in finding solutions to these complex issues.

Now I would like to say a few words on another very topical issue today — that of the mass media and media freedom. I fully agree that media freedom needs to be protected and that this protection needs to be enshrined in the law. Several years ago the media needed protection from enslavement by private companies, and now it needs protection from administrative pressure at various levels.

But overall, as I discussed with the Federal Chancellor today, we are already on the threshold of the complete media freedom — I am talking not about the situation in Russia here but about the situation in the world as a whole — that comes with technological progress, and above all the unstoppable development of the global Internet. To give just one example, in 2000 there were only around 3 million Internet users in Russia. By last year, this figure had already risen to 30-35 million people — one in three or four Russians — and the experts say it will continue to rise fast.

This situation brings to the fore not just the idea of media freedom, which is already guaranteed by modern digital technology, something that cannot now be stopped, but also the problem of how to preserve moral and cultural values in this common information space. This is not just a national issue but a problem confronting all of Europe and the world as a whole. It is one of the serious challenges facing civilization in its entirety.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You have taken part in discussing Russia's long-term development plans and its place in Europe and the world, and will continue to do so, including at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. I hope to see many of you again tomorrow in our northern capital.

We are very conscious of how difficult the innovative development road we have chosen for our country will be. It is not an easy road for even as great an economic power as Germany. We therefore seek to intensify our cooperation in science and technology, in education, in support for small- and medium-sized businesses and in work between our big companies too.

Consistent and systemic work to improve our business climate, remove excessive administrative barriers, prevent corruption, which is a very serious problem in our country, provide maximum support to small businesses (my first decisions addressed precisely these issues), strengthen the role of the law in our society and State and create an independent and effective judicial system forms the basis for our economic action programme.

We are working actively today on these very important objectives. All this work depends on advancing the role of the law, which is there to protect people's interests and defend their honour and dignity.

I think that we should also consider joint projects in the areas I named above. One possible project would be reciprocal internships for lawyers and judges. Another could be joint programmes for training effective civil servants. The ten years of German contribution to the Presidential Training Programme for Managers is a good base on which to build in this work. Over this time, Russia has trained around 3,500 specialists through this programme and, since 2006, 100 German interns come to Russia every year and learn new skills through the Russian-German cooperation programmes.

There is great demand for these specialists in the Russian regions. The mergers taking place between regions have also opened up new prospects for cooperation with the German federal Länder. Our regions need to learn to speak a common language, as St. Petersburg, Novgorod Region, Kaliningrad Region, Kaluga Region and the corresponding Länder in Germany have done.

We also want to continue practical cooperation in important areas for global development. Russia consistently supports Germany's efforts to continue European Union cooperation in climate change and reducing carbon emissions. We are ready for dialogue on a whole range of environmental protection issues, including issues affecting the Arctic. Many countries today, including Russia and Germany, are marking World Environment Day. Our country is also marking Ecologist's Day for the first time. I would like therefore to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone working in these areas. Just two days ago I held a meeting on this subject and signed a special decree issuing instructions regarding environmental protection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bilateral trade between Russia and Germany has grown fourfold over the last six years. It hit a record last year, exceeding $52 billion. Germany is Russia's biggest supplier of imported goods, 90 per cent of which are vehicles, equipment and metal products. Our country is set to become Germany's second-biggest importer over these coming years, after the United States, overtaking even China. Germany is also one of the leaders when it comes to real investment in Russia, with investment already totalling 28 billion euros.

There are also clearly excellent prospects for joint projects involving Russian and German scientists. Introducing and spreading the use of applied developments and effective use of joint intellectual property are issues of particular importance in this respect.

It will be for young people in both our countries to continue Russian-German cooperation and enrich it with new initiatives. You know that youth contacts have already become a major part of our cooperation. As the German poet and thinker Schiller wrote, "Man grows great along with greater goals."

Everything that we invest in our young people today will bring us returns in the future. I am sure that our contribution to their education and to the development of their minds, talents and spiritual wealth is a contribution to the progress and dependable future of our two peoples and of Europe as a whole.

Another obvious resource that can bring us closer together is our compatriots, above all the Russian Germans. Their views and opinions on the development of our relations serve as a kind of litmus test of cooperation between our countries and help us to get rid of hackneyed stereotypes.

In this respect I am very much in favour of modernizing our humanitarian ties. Of course, this is something we need to work on together, and we need to have public support, media interest and the infrastructure of the ties between our different regions and religions behind us.

Colleagues,

Here in Berlin there is a very tangible feeling of how history and modernity, memories of the past and visions of the future are all tightly woven together. Berlin is familiar to every Russian and many Russians have their own special places here.

Berlin today is a lively, exciting, forward-looking city. In this sense it is similar to Moscow, which also has its own specific nature, its own dynamic and energy. There is a strong feeling here of how history binds rather than divides us. I am sure that those who have understood this truth cannot lose.

Thank you.